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UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT  
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

Case No. 09-50026-reg

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In the Matter of:

MOTORS LIQUIDATION COMPANY, ET AL.,  
F/K/A GENERAL MOTORS CORP., ET AL.,

Debtors.

- - - - -x

U.S. Bankruptcy Court  
One Bowling Green  
New York, New York

February 10, 2011  
9:47 AM

B E F O R E:  
HON. ROBERT E. GERBER  
U.S. BANKRUPTCY JUDGE

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HEARING re Debtors' Objection to Proofs of Claim Nos. 16440 and  
16441

Transcribed by: Sharona Shapiro

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BY: JACOB L. NEWTON, ESQ. (TELEPHONICALLY)

1 factors require me to deny class action certification in this  
2 Chapter 11 case, just a few weeks before the scheduled  
3 confirmation hearing, in any event.

4 I'm not now going to repeat all of the underlying law  
5 applicable to matters of this character. I discussed them in  
6 depth just a few weeks ago in the apartheid decision. And for  
7 understandable reasons, class counsel doesn't dispute the  
8 underlying law or legal standards or otherwise debate either  
9 the holding of my recent apartheid decision or the legal  
10 principles or reasoning it contained.

11 Turning first to class action superiority, the second  
12 of the two requirements that Rule 23(b)(3) imposes, and which,  
13 at the risk of stating the obvious, is in addition to the  
14 requirement for the predominance of common issues. The points  
15 I made in the apartheid decision about class action treatment  
16 not being superior are equally applicable here. Assuming,  
17 arguendo, that we could conquer the class action predominance  
18 issues by setting up enough subclasses and plow through the  
19 individual law of twenty-six states as applicable to the claims  
20 of members of those various classes, that would place  
21 tremendous strain on the bankruptcy system and the resources of  
22 this Court in particular.

23 And class action treatment wouldn't be superior to the  
24 mechanisms that are available in a bankruptcy court, for the  
25 reasons I noted in the apartheid decision, based in material

1 part on Chief Judge Bernstein's decision in Musicland, as he  
2 had there pointed out, the inherent simplicity of the  
3 bankruptcy process tends to make class action treatment not  
4 superior, as a general matter, and in this case, because an  
5 individual claimant would need only to fill out and return a  
6 proof of claim form. Further, the deterrence that class  
7 actions often provide would be of little utility in a case like  
8 this one, where Old GM is liquidating and the punishment for  
9 any wrongful Old GM conduct would be borne by Old GM's innocent  
10 creditors. See Musicland 362 B.R. at pages 650 to 651.

11 Turning now to unique bankruptcy concerns. First, I  
12 noted in the apartheid decision that the motion for class  
13 certification should have been made much earlier in that case,  
14 citing the Ephedra cases and Northwest Airlines; and that late  
15 motions of this character raise concerns when they would have a  
16 material effect on distributions to other creditors, as the 100  
17 million dollars in claims asserted here so obviously would.

18 I ruled there that late filing would not, by itself,  
19 bar class certification, but that it was an important factor.  
20 My thinking in that respect hasn't changed in the three weeks  
21 since I ruled on that issue before. It's not relevant for  
22 purposes of placing blame, but it's relevant because late  
23 motions of this type have a major effect on the administration  
24 of the Chapter 11 case and on potential prejudice to creditors.

25 Here, the Saturn plaintiffs failed to file a motion

1 for class action treatment until fourteen months after Old GM's  
2 bar date and twenty months after the commencement of Old GM's  
3 bankruptcy. Given the substantial impact that almost 100  
4 million dollars in claims could have on the Old GM estate, the  
5 Saturn claimants should have sought class certification here,  
6 just as in the apartheid litigation, far sooner than they did.  
7 And that concern is particularly significant and perhaps  
8 obvious, when we have a confirmation hearing set for March 3,  
9 only three and a half weeks away. The issues presented here  
10 would take extraordinary court resources to hear in an  
11 allowance hearing or even to estimate under Section 502, and  
12 where until and unless the claims were fixed or estimated, we'd  
13 have to set up a 100 million dollar reserve.

14 Secondly, we here have a variant of the point I made  
15 before, which is relevant in this different context. Once  
16 again, assuming that I could deal with the predominance issues  
17 by setting up enough subclasses, the issues dealing with the  
18 twenty-six states' separate laws and the particular issues as  
19 amongst the various subclasses and other aspects of the  
20 individual nature of consumers' claims, dealing with this,  
21 would just place too much strain on the bankruptcy system and  
22 on this Court.

23 As Judge Rakoff observed in the Ephedra litigation,  
24 bankruptcy significantly changes the balance of factors to be  
25 considered in determining whether to allow a class action. And



1 class certification may be less desirable in bankruptcy than in  
2 ordinary civil litigation. See his Ephedra decision at 329  
3 B.R. at page 5. See also Judge Lifland's analysis very  
4 recently in Blockbuster. Class-based claims have the potential  
5 to adversely affect the administration of a case by adding  
6 layers of procedural and factual complexity, siphoning the  
7 debtor's resources and interfering with the orderly progression  
8 of the reorganization.

9 For those reasons, among others, I must find that  
10 entertaining these claims on a class action basis would  
11 significantly complicate the GM debtors' Chapter 11 case here.  
12 Thus, on a matter where bankruptcy judges have unquestioned  
13 discretion to determine whether class action certification  
14 would inappropriately clash with bankruptcy needs and concerns,  
15 I can't authorize class action treatment here.

16 Finally, unlike the apartheid case, the quality of the  
17 notice here is not even debatable. The notice within the  
18 United States was unquestionably satisfactory. And as I noted  
19 before, that is, in the apartheid litigation, the filing of the  
20 GM Chapter 11 case was well known. Paraphrasing Judge Kaplan's  
21 observation back in July 2009, on a stay application from my  
22 363 decision, the filing of the GM Chapter 11 case was an event  
23 of which no sentient American was unaware.

24 Here, the class is made up of U.S. citizens who are  
25 car owners and who, it may reasonably be inferred, watch

1 television, listen to the radio, read newspapers and knew any  
2 problems that had infected GM and had resulted in GM's  
3 bankruptcy. It would be incorrect to argue that they did not  
4 have notice. I'm not persuaded by the distinction that I heard  
5 in oral argument that I should consider notice of GM's  
6 bankruptcy to be an unsatisfactory substitute for telling  
7 people that they have problems in their vehicles with respect  
8 to their bad timing chains. If anyone had a problem with a  
9 failed timing chain, he or she would know that and could easily  
10 file a regular proof of claim in this case.

11 The debtors point out, without dispute, that there is  
12 no decision in this district in which the Court has ever  
13 exercised its discretion to make civil rule applicable in a  
14 Chapter 11 case, where the class was not certified pre-petition  
15 or the estate didn't consent. In this case, with confirmation  
16 just three and a half weeks away, I'm not going to be the  
17 first.

18 For the reasons I just summarized, I'm denying the  
19 cross motion for class certification and I'm granting the  
20 motion to disallow the claims insofar as they're asserted on  
21 behalf of absent class members. However, I will authorize the  
22 individual class representatives to file individual proofs of  
23 claim for their personal damages underlying these claims,  
24 within the later of the time agreed upon between class action  
25 plaintiffs' counsel and the debtors, or thirty days from the

1 entry of the order denying class certification here.

2 If the individual class representatives elect to avail  
3 themselves of the right I'm giving them to file individual  
4 proofs of claim, I'm ruling that their doing so will be without  
5 prejudice to any rights they have to appeal or leave to appeal.

6 The debtors are to settle an order in accordance with  
7 the foregoing, but they're first to consult with Mr. Schwartz  
8 and to find out from him, whether he'd like to appeal or seek  
9 leave to appeal or otherwise wants me to make full findings of  
10 fact, conclusions of law and bases for the exercise of my  
11 discretion. I have many things on my plate, and obviously I  
12 think this capsulizes the bases for my ruling. But if it's  
13 desired, I will make more extensive full findings, as I did on  
14 the apartheid decision. Mr. Schwartz is entitled to that, and  
15 if he's of a mind to, he's entitled to that before or at the  
16 time that I enter the order.

17 I appreciate your indulgence. We've now gone through  
18 the whole morning, and I made you wait a while for this  
19 decision. We're now adjourned. Have a good day.

20 (Whereupon these proceedings were concluded at 12:07 p.m.)

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I N D E X

RULINGS

	Page	Line
Class certification is denied	36	18
Claims of absent class members are disallowed	36	20
Individual class representatives may file	42	21
individual proofs of claim for personal		
damages		